THE

EVIDENCE;

OR,

Religious and Moral Gazette.

RELIGION AND MORALITY ARE THE BASIS OF HUMAN FELICITY.

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No. III.

To Young people, &c. Introduction to the evidences of the divine origin of the scriptures.

SINCE it may be supposed there is a general agreement among those who read the *Evidence*, respecting the divine authenticity of the scriptures, it may possibly be deemed inexpedient to solicit their attention to the subject. But when we consider the number who at the present day, call in question the evidences of that religion on which we are resting our highest hopes, and a still greater number who are doubting and halting between two opinions, can there be any impropriety, in a work of this description, in stating some outlines of the argument on which our faith is grounded? Taking into view also, the possibility, if not of convincing, yet of aiding and strengthening, the minds of some, who are more or less inquisitive on the subject, it is conceived, the importance and utility of the undertaking will hardly be questioned.

To the young christian, who has rested his everlasting concerns on the glorious redeemer, it must be peculiarly pleasing to have condensed under his eye, those arguments which vindicate the security of his interest.

IF we were about to embark on a very lengthy voyage, with all we hold dear, should we not be very careful to examine the ship in which we were about to sail? Instead of having our attention principally occupied with the paintings, or the elegance of her accommodations, we should be studious to ascertain the strength of the ship. We should go from stem to stern, look carefully to every part, and scrutinize with the most critical eye every joint and crevice, that not the least defect might be overlooked. Especially, should we do this, if any one had manifested a suspicion of her entire safety for so vast and important an undertaking. And ought we not to be unspeakably more solicitous respecting the permanency of the foundation on which we are building our interests for a never-ending and vast eternity.?

THAT the design before us might issue advantageously, let us for a moment suppose, the world of mankind as they now are estranged from God and immersed in sin, let us suppose ourselves totally disconnected and uninterested, standing only as spectators, and from an elevated spot looking down on the in-

habitants of the earth, and taking a full prospect of their characters and actions. Let us suppose at the same time, that we beheld them waked up to a sense of their real condition and viewing it to be most wretched, in consequence of their sinfulness, and finding alsoby all their researches no consistent way in which they might be restored to the favor of their injured sovereign. While in their distressing circumstances, enclosed with an impenetrable veil of darkness, and sinking in despair would it not appear to us the greatest favor imaginable, for their creator to speak to them, and let them know all his mind; and if there was a consistent way in which he could extend forgiveness, to point it out, and the conditions if there were any, on which they might look for pardon and eternal life? Under these circumstances must it not be most desirable to have a communication of God's mind, in which he should inform them in what light he viewed them in relation to himself, and whether he could consistently with his honor reinstate them into that noble eminence of virtue and happiness from which they had fallen?

In this view of things, can any one under the influence of candid & deep reflection, hesitate to acknowledge, that a special revelation from God, is in itself very desirable. Socrates, one of the most celebrated Philosophers of Grece, was affected with the subject, and manifested a very strong desire and hope, that God would make known his mind to the world by a special revelation, that they might be enlightened respecting their duty to God, and the way in which he might consistently exercise his forgiveness.

I very well know, it has been strenuously contested by infidels, that reason is sufficient to guide us to happiness without any assistance. But what is reason without sources of information on which it may act? Reason is the power of judging of whatever is offered to its examination. But can this power in man be informed beyond the extent of light communicated? To their boasted mental energy, infidels are willing to call in their aid the light of nature. This they eulogize in very high terms.

So far we will agree with them, that God's works, prove his eternal power and Godhead. But shall we for this, reject all additional communications he may make, especially, when such communications are necessary to specify a way in which sinners may be rescued from ruin to divine favor? Does any or all God's works of creation and providence inform a sinner how he may be forgiven and saved? Ask the heavens and the earth and the things that are therein this question. How am I, who have sinned to be recovered to divine favor? and they can give you no answer. And yet men who know themselves sinners stand braced against every gracious communication from God. This is very similar to a man's glorying in the light of a taper, and yet decrying as useless and beneath notice the sun in his splendor; or it is like prizing and panegyrizing the small droppings of a cistern, and yet despising the fountain which feeds it, though it be adequate to vastly more extensive and important purposes.

So soon as we admit that God has communicated some knowledge of himself in his works, we at once accede that it is both possible & practicable for him to make further communications. Because if God can give to creatures one ray of light

respecting himself. he can increase this light to such extent as he sees fit and suited to the exigencies of his creatures. Every man who holds there is a God and that any thing respecting him may be learned from his works, in this goes too far to deny the possibility of a revelation. Conceding thus far, which the infidel, even on his own ground is under the necessity of going, he will be obliged to advance a step further. If he acknowledges a revelation possible, he must also acknowledge the bestowment neither incredible, nor improbable. Because, if God does communicate some light to his creatures, it is not incredible that he should communicate more. Indeed is it not highly credible, if God having made creatures capable of receiving instruction from him, and after having communicated to them some knowledge of himself, provided his creatures should be in circumstances to need it, and he could consistently do it. Is not their supposition a most reasonable one? If then the infidel on his own ground is obliged to admit, that it is neither incredible, nor improbable, that God should make known his mind more fully, than what he has done in the light of nature, then he must acknowledge, he would act in character, and in fact, exhibit his goodness in thus doing.

From the first glance at the subject, it appears that a revelation, considering the sinful state of the world, containing something totally beyond what can be gathered from the religion of nature is both needed and desirable, and even on deistical principles the bestowment is neither incredible nor improbable, and that God would act in character and perfectly consistent with infinite goodness in thus revealing himself. Laying all these things together, we are brought forward to enquire whether such a revelation is in fact given. The question now to be put is this, whether such revelation is in the world; and if so, where is it to be found? In what part of the world? In what volume? And what evidence does it carry to support its claims?

Shall we search for it in the writings of Confucius, or in the moralizings of Mancocapac, or in the Jewish Talmud, or the Mahometan Alcoran? All the above have laid claims to supernatural origin. But when their several authorities are examined, we find them deficient. They carry their own confutation. Their contents are in many respects visionary, in many more week and frivolous, and in more still absurd and of the most pernicous tendency on the heart and life. None of these, therefore, can be ascribed to the infinite God as their inditer, nor stand supported by those evidences necessary to entitle them to our credibility. If then, God has been pleased to make known his mind to men otherwise than by his works, this revelation must be contained in the scriptures of the old and new testaments. The question now is brought to this issue. Is there evidence that this book is given by divine inspiration and entitled to our belief as a revelation from God? From this place the subject will be pursued in the next number. E.

"*Monmouth, N. J. Dec.* 10, 1805.

"Dear Sir,

"Agreeable to your request, I now send you in writing the remarkable account which I sometime since gave you verbally, respecting your good friend, my worthy predecessor, the late Rev. William Ten-

nent, of this place. In a very free and feeling conversation on religion, and on the future rest and blessedness of the people of God, (while travelling together from Monmouth to Princetown) I mentioned to Mr. Tennent that I should be highly gratified in hearing, from his own mouth, an account of the *France* which he was said to have been in, unless the relation would be disagreeable to himself. After a short silence, he proceeded, saying, that he had been sick with a fever; that the fever increased, and he by degrees sunk under it. After some time (as his friends informed him) he died, or appeared to die, in the same manner as persons usually do; that in laying him out, one happened to draw his hand under the left arm, and perceived a small tremor in the flesh; that he was laid out, and was cold and stiff. The time for his funeral was appointed and the people collected; but a young doctor, his particular friend, pleaded with great earnestness that he might not then be buried, as the tremor under the arm continued; that his brother, Gilbert, became impatient with the young gentleman, and said to him, "What! a man not dead who is cold and stiff as a stake!" The importunate young friend, however, prevailed; another day was appointed for the burial, and the people separated. During this interval many means were made use of to discover, if possible, some symptoms of life, but none appeared excepting the tremor. The doctor never left him for three nights and three days. The people again met to bury him, but could not even then obtain the consent of his friend, who pleaded for one hour more; and when that was gone, he pleaded for half an hour, and then for a quarter of an hour; when, just at the close of this period, on which hung his last hope, Mr. Tennent opened his eyes. They then pried open his mouth, which was stiff, so as to get a quill into it, through which some liquid was conveyed into the stomach, and he by degrees recovered.

"THIS account, as intimated before, Mr. Tennent said he had received from his friends. I said to him, "Sir, you seem to be one indeed raised from the dead, and may tell us what it is to die, and what you were sensible of while in that state." He then replied in the following words: "As *to dying*—I found my fever increase, and I became weaker and weaker until, *all at once*, I found myself in heaven, as I thought. I saw no shape as to the Deity, *but glory all unutterable!*" Here he paused, as though unable to find words to express his views, let his bridle fall, and lifting up his hands, proceeded, "I can say, as St. Paul did, I heard and saw things all unutterable! I saw a great multitude before this glory, apparently in the height of bliss, singing most melodiously. I was transported with my own situation, viewing all my troubles ended and my rest and glory begun, and was about to join the great and happy multitude, when one came to me, looked me full in the face, laid his hand upon my shoulder, and said, "You must go back." These words went through me; nothing could have shocked me more; I cried out, Lord, must I go back! With this shock I opened my eyes in this world. When I saw I was in the world, I fainted, for several times, as one probably would naturally have done in so weak a situation."

"MR. TENNENT further informed me, that he had so entirely lost the recollection of his past life, and the benefit of his former studies, that he could neither understand

what was spoken to him, nor write, nor read his own name. That he had to begin a new, and did not recollect that he had ever read before, until he had again learned his letters, and was able to pronounce the monosyllables, such as *thee* and *thou*. But, that as his strength returned, which was very slow, his memory also returned. Yet, notwithstanding the extreme feebleness of his situation, his recollection of what he saw and heard while in heaven, as he supposed, and the sense of divine things, which he there obtained, continued all the time in their full strength, so that he was continually in something like an ecstacy of mind. "And," said he, "for three years, the sense of divine things continued so great, and every thing else appeared so completely vain, when compared to heaven, that could I have had the world for stooping down for it, I believe I should not have thought of doing it."

A. M. M.

ANECDOTE.

THE following anecdote of Calvin, while it does much honor to his moral and religious character, is a curious historical fact, which deserves to be generally known. It was related at Geneva, by *Deodati*, and of Calvin's successors, to the first Lord Orrery, who flourished under the reign of Charles the first. The extract is taken from 'The state letters and memoirs of the Right Hon. Roger Boyle, page 4. 5.

'Eckius being sent by the Pope, legate into France, upon his return resolved to take Geneva in his way, on purpose to see Calvin; and if occasion were, to attempt reducing him to the Romish church. Therefore, when Eckius was come within a league of Geneva, he left his retinue there, and went, accompanied but with one man, to the city, in the forenoon. Setting up his horses at an inn, he enquired where Calvin lived, whose house being shown him, he knocked at the door, and Calvin himself came to open it to him. Eckius enquired for Mr. Calvin, he was told he was the person. Eckius acquainted him, that he was a stranger; and having heard much of his fame, was come to wait upon him. Calvin invited him to come in, and he entered the house with him; where discoursing of many things concerning religion, Eckius perceived Calvin to be an ingenuous, learned man, and desired to know if he had not a garden to walk in. To which Calvin replying he had, they both went into it; and there Eckius began to inquire of him why he left the Romish church, and offered him some arguments to persuade him to return; but Calvin could by no means be inclined to think of it. At last, Eckius told him, that he would put his life into his hands; and then said he was Eckius the Pope's legate. At this discovery, Calvin was not a little surprised, and begged his pardon, that he had not treated him with that respect which was due to his quality. Eckius returned the compliment, and told him if he would come back to the Roman church, he would certainly procure for him a Cardinal's cap. But Calvin was not to be removed by such an offer. Eckius then asked him what revenue he had? he told the Cardinal he had that house and garden, and fifty livres per annum, beside an annual present of some wine and corn; on which he lived very contentedly. Eckius told him, that a man of his parts deserved a greater revenue; and then renewed his invitation to come over to the Romish church,

promising him a better stipend if he would. But Calvin giving him thanks assured him he was well satisfied with his condition. About this time dinner was ready, when he entertained his guest as well as he could, excused the defects of it, and paid him great respect. Eckius after dinner desired to know, if he might not be admitted to see the church, which anciently was the cathedral of the city. Calvin very readily answered that he might; acsordingly, he sent to the officers to be ready with the keys, and desired some of the syndicts to be there present, not acquainting them who the stranger was. As soon therefore as it was convenient, they both went towards the church, and as Eckius was coming out of Calvin's house, he drew out a purse, with about one hundred pistoles, and presented it to Calvin. But Calvin desired to be excused; Eckius told him, he gave it him to buy books, as well as to express his respect for him. Calvin with much regret took the purse, and they proceeded to the church, where the syndicts and officers waited upon them; at the sight of whom Eckius thought he had been betrayed, and whispered his thoughts in Calvin's ear; but Calvin assured him to the contrary. Thereupon they went into the church; and Eckius, having seen all, told Calvin he did not expect to find things in so decent an order, having been told to the contrary. After having taken a full view of every thing, Eckius was returning out of the church; but Calvin stopped him a little, and calling the syndicts and officers together, took out the purse of gold which Eckius had given him, telling them that he had received that gold from this worthy stranger, and that now he gave it to the poor, and so put it all into the poor box that was kept there. The syndicts thanked the stranger, and Eckius admired the charity and modesty of Calvin. When they were come out of the church, Calvin invited Eckius again to his house, but he replied that he must depart; so thanking him for his civilities, offered to take his leave. But Calvin waited upon him to the inn, and walked with him a mile out of the territories of Geneva, where with great compliments, they took a farewell of each other."

Eckius was a very learned divine, professor in the university of Ingolstadt, memorable for his opposition to Luther, Melancthon, and other reformers in Germany. He died in 1543, aged 57. See Hoffmanni Lexicon, Tom. 2, page 130, or Encyclopedia Brittanica, vol. 6th, page 296.

As. Mis. Mag.

LITERARY NOTICE.

Doctor Dwight's sermon on duelling.

This sermon, was preached in the College Chapel at New-Haven. "It was no part of the design of any observations made in it to refer to any particular events or persons." "The sole object" of the preacher (as by himself expressed) "was to establish principles in the minds of his audience, and peculiarly of his pupils; and not at all to attack, or characterize persons."

Taking the following appropriate text, "*A man that doth violence to the blood of any person, shall flee to the pit; let no man slay him:*" the preacher exhibits to view, in a manner that would seemingly over-

power any mind with conviction, the *folly*, the *guilt*, and the *mischief*, of *duelling*.

Before the stern and awful majesty of truth, the duellist stands appalled and confounded; the blood stained laurels are torn from his brow: his pleas and excuses vanish like vapours from the presence of the sun; his egregious folly is made manifest; the rankness of his offence against God and man, is seen in the strong colours of reason and argument, aided by sublime eloquence.

In the mind of the reader, the alternate emotions of indignation and horror, suddenly gave place to the anguish of unavailing grief and compasson. The "uncovered coffin" appears to view; the bloody corpse is plainly seen. There is beheld a train of bereaved and broken hearted relatives; the father of the wretched victim of false honor, "fixed in motionless sorrow;" the mother, "wrung with agony." A group still more affecting is presented; the reader wets the page with tears.

"Turn thine eyes, next," solemnly exclaims the preacher to the bloody victor, "on the miserable form, surrounded by a cluster of helpless and wretched children, see her eyes roll with phrenzy, and her frame quivering with terror. Thy hand has made her a widow, and her children orphans. At thee, though unseen, is directed that bewildered stare of agony. At thee she trembles; for thee she listens; lest the murderer of her husband should be now approaching to murder her children also.

"She, and they, have lost their all. Thou hast robbed them of their support, their protector, their guide, their solace, their hope. In the grave all these blessings have been buried by thy hand."

The superior elegance of its language, is but the smallest part of the merit which this discourse possesses. While it enchains attention, it informs the understanding; while it awakens the indignant, and sympathetic passions, it convinces the judgement and corrects the heart. In the clear and awful light of the sacred oracles, it displays the horrible turpitude, as well as the direful consequences, of the crime, which, in some parts of even this christian country, has been "vindicated, honored, and rewarded, by common consent, and undisguised suffrage," among those who filled the superior ranks of society."

(Con. Courant.)

REMARKABLE CONVERSION OF A DEIST.

Not by night, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.

The energy of his eternal truth was most forcibly applied to the heart of the late Rev. W Tennent, of America, on the following remarkable occasion:—In his neighborhood resided a professed Deist, a man of considerable attainments as to wordly wisdom. He often, from whatever motive, attended the ministry of Mr. Tennent whose powers as a preacher were of a superior kind: his skill in the scriptures being deep, and his style rich, argumentative, and impressive. Learning once the intention of the Deist to attend divine service on the following Sabbath, Mr. Tennent

most diligently prepared for the occasion, by meditating upon, and fixing in his mind every argument which might work a conviction. Thus prepared, he ascended the pulpit. "But who is Paul, or who is Apollos? Paul may plant, and Apollos may water; but it is God that giveth the increase." Praise and prayer being concluded, the discourse began; but soon the preacher's memory was plunged into perfect oblivion; and not being in the custom of using notes, he in vain endeavored to proceed; his mind was sealed up as to the subject of discourse, and he was under the painful necessity of confessing his inability, and concluded with prayer. The spirit of God was now at work. The Deist was led to reflect upon the extraordinary case: he had, on former occasions, experienced and admired Mr. Tennent's powers of oratory. From his concluding prayer on this occasion he found him in vigour of mind. To what could he trace the sudden dereliction of his powers, when entering upon such a discourse? Happy man! he was led to discover in it *the finger of God!* The joyful change soon reached Mr. Tennent, who, doubtless, was deeply humbled and grateful; for he ever afterwards spoke of his *dumb sermon* as the best he ever preached.

(Evan. Mag.)

ANECDOTE.

On the top of a hill, near Haddam Castle, stands a square tower, over the door of which are carved figures of a dove and serpent, and between them, the word *Repentance*, whence the building is called *The Tower of Repentance.* It is said, that Sir Richard Steele, while riding near this place, saw a shepherd-boy reading his bible, and asked him what he learned from it; The way to heaven answered the boy. And can you shew it to me? said Sir Richard, in banter. You must go by that tower, said the lad, pointing to the tower of *Repentance.*

Evan. Mag.

WISE EPICURISM.

Live, while you live, the Epicure would say,
And seize the pleasures of the present day;
Live while you live, the sacred preacher cries,
And give to God each moment as it flies.
Lord, in my views may both united be,
I live in pleasure when I live to thee.

W.

☞ As this number completes the first quarter, the readers of the Evidence will be pleased to recognize the conditions and make remittance as soon as possible. Those who receive the Evidence by mail, will remit to Dr. Thomas O'H. Croswell, Post-Master, Catskill, who is appointed agent to receive such sums as may be forwarded.

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